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THE UNITED EMPIRE LOYALISTS.

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Having been asked to tell something about the United Empire Loyalists, I am reminded that comparatively few people even in Canada know anything about them. Educated and generally well-informed persons ask, "Who were the U. E. Loyalists?"

The question is variously answered. A few years ago a teacher in the Hamilton Collegiate Institute, told his class that the U. E. Loyalists were the curse of Canada, had retarded its progress in every respect, and were distinguished by their laziness and general incompetency. He said that in passing through the country it was easy to tell where they had located by the dilapidated buildings, miserable fences and general air of disreputability about the farms. The magazines, story-papers, story-books, and many of the so-called histories supplied to the readers of Canada, as well as to their own people by the press of the United States before their civil war of 1861-65, gave the loyalists a very bad name. The tories, as they called them, are pictured as the most cruel, bloodthirsty, dishonest and inhuman of mankind, utterly lost to all sense of right and justice. On the other hand, public documents, private papers and documents of their enemies and what have been saved of their own writings, tell a much more favorable story. An English lady, long resident in this country, Mrs. Traill, in her very useful and interesting book on the wild flowers and plants of Canada, says of the U. E. L. that they were a remarkable people, distinguished for their ability and industry, many of them highly educated and refined, and that they endured hardships, labors, privations and dangers almost unprecedented in the history of the civilized world.

Among their descendants many believe them to have been paragons of patriotism, and eminent for piety, industry and intelligence. But none of these tell how they earned the name. Briefly stated, the U. E. Loyalists were those who, in the Revolutionary War of 1774 to 1783, were opposed to the dismemberment of the British Empire. In the short time allotted me for this paper it will not be possible to more than cast a passing glance at a theme which has filled volumes and might fill libraries. There is no time to cite all the authorities for my statements, suffice it to say that they are facts which can be proved by reliable documents.

The ministry of Lord North, which was in power in England in 1774, endeavored to take from the American colonists some

of their long possessed rights, infringing upon their liberties, and imposing taxes, while refusing to them a voice regarding those taxes. The colonists, as freeborn British subjects, were almost unanimous in opposing these encroachments and impositions. Through their legislatures they memorialized the king, asking redress for their grievances. Their petitions, coming from detached legislatures, not receiving satisfactory replies, they elected a Congress to represent the thirteen colonies and give the force of union to their efforts. The delegates were instructed to secure the rights of the colonies while maintaining the integrity of the empire. Nearly two years they continued their expressions of loyalty and made no move towards independence. During this time the colonists took up arms and formed an army to resist the forces which had been sent to compel their submission to the unjust measures of the Ministry. The colonists were successful in almost every encounter in this period. While Congress, the legislatures and all the people, of both parties, were unitedly demanding their rights, they had the sympathy of a majority of the people of England, and of a large minority in Parliament. So strong was this feeling that the Government found difficulty in getting men for the army in America; many distinguished officers resigned rather than engage in the conflict. The Government was continually losing friends. Indeed, on a motion of General Conway, which was favorable to the Americans, a majority of Parliament voted against the Ministry. Notwithstanding this it continued in power; however, this caused a modification of its policy, and instructions of a conciliatory character were sent by Lord Howe, in 1776. In the meantime there were in America a few separationists or independence men, of great ability. These, taking advantage of the long delay and of the exasperating policy of the British Ministry, carried on an independence propaganda. By various wiles, but known to unscrupulous politicians, in addition to all lawful and just methods, they succeeded not only in gaining the sympathies of half the people, but contrived by a trick to get Congress by a majority of one to vote for "Eternal Separation" and the independence of the colonies. Lord Howe arrived one day too late.

In the Declaration of Independence Congress upheld the doctrine that all men are free and equal, and should be governed according to the dictates of their own consciences. Having so declared they immediately proceeded to announce that all Americans who would not accept the new order of things should be treated as traitors and outlaws. The independence party succeeded in getting possession of the machinery of government in all the colonies and took measures to disfranchise, overawe and control or expel the loyalists.

A few short extracts from American historians will give a faint idea of the treatment received by the loyalists in many

sections where the independence party were in the majority and where certain lewd fellows of the baser sort were in the ascendency. In Hildreth's History of the United States we read: "Very serious, too, was the change in the legal position of the class known as Tories, in many of the States a large minority, and in all respectable for wealth and social position. This loyal minority, especially its more conspicuous members, as the warmth of political feeling increased, had been exposed to the violence of mobs and to all sorts of personal indignities, in which private malice or a wanton and insolent spirit of mischief had been too often gratified under the disguise of patriotism. The barbarous and disgraceful practice of tarring and feathering and carting Tories—placing them in a cart and carrying them about as a sort of spectacle—had become in some places a favorite amusement. Having boldly seized the reigns of government, the new state authorities claimed the allegiance of all residents within their limits. Those who refused to acknowledge their authority, or who adhered to their enemies, were exposed to severe penalties, confiscation of property, imprisonment, banishment, and finally death."

A vivid picture, truly, of the reward of loyalty and granting equal rights to all men. But listen to some more: The Convention of the State of New York resolved, "That any person being an adherent to the King of Great Britain shall be guilty of treason and suffer death." Again, the same Convention resolved, "That, as the inhabitants of King's County have determined not to oppose the enemy, that a committee shall be appointed to enquire into the authenticity of these reports, and to disarm and secure the disaffected, to remove or destroy the stock of grain, and, if necessary, to lay the whole country waste."

The pages of history teem with similar proofs of the harshness and cruelty with which the loyalists were treated; their enemies bearing witness. Need we wonder that some of them forgot justice and mercy when they had an opportunity to retaliate? Is it surprising 35,000 native Americans served in the royal army during the war, or that 100,000 loyalists sailed from the port of New York alone, for more peaceful homes? Before the Declaration of Independence Washington's army numbered 27,000 men; immediately afterward the loyalists began to leave it, some returning to their homes and many joining the British army, so that within a few months Washington's forces had dwindled to 4000.

For one hundred years the French and the Spaniards had striven to destroy the English colonies and to drive them into the sea. They would have succeeded had not England poured out her blood and her treasure in helping the colonists to defend themselves. Now, however, Congress allied itself with those powers who were eager to break up the British Empire, and

with their very substantial aid the royal armies were overcome. This but intensified the feeling of the loyalists, who looked on these foreigners as their hereditary enemies.

The Treaty of Ghent, in 1783, terminated the war. Here the American Commissioner was more astute than his British confrere, and among other things in which he gained the advantage, he maintained that Congress had no power to reinstate or indemnify the loyalists. This, too, in spite of the fact that Congress controlled millions of acres of wild lands outside the State boundaries. He held that upon the separate States devolved the work of dealing with the loyalists; but undertook to urge upon the States to restore their rights and their property. Of the thirteen States North Carolina was the only one to do this act of justice. The others continued their persecutions. Yet even from that State many came to Canada.

The States now being at peace with England, many of the loyalists decided to accept the situation; some whose property had been confiscated set about making new homes for themselves. Many residing in large communities of their own way of thinking, or among neighbors whose anti-British views were not extreme, had been unmolested and retained their property. But even among these were some whose love of freedom was stronger than the desire for ease and comfort, and for fifteen years after the war ceased there was a constant stream of loyalists emigrating to Canada. 10,000 are said to have located in this Province, all passing through what was then the wilderness of Western New York. The journey from the Hudson River to this country was not then a pleasant holiday trip of a day, but occupied as many weeks as it now takes hours to traverse. There were no roads, no settlers, no shelter except what the travellers carried with them. The women and children rode horseback, in most cases the men walked, driving the cattle, when they had any. There being no roads, no wagons could come and only such things as could be packed on horses were brought. Through hundreds of miles of a howling wilderness, surrounded by wild beasts and often still more savage Indians, refined and delicate women, and children of tender years, as well as the strong, the healthy and the hardy, had to toil through mud and through forest, frequently suffering hunger in addition to their other discomforts. After all their toil, suffering and danger in reaching Canada it was a wilderness, without homes, roads, churches, schools or mills. First, then, they must cut trees and build log cabins to shelter them, living meanwhile in bark huts or in tents. The log houses when built often went for months without doors or windows, until the glass and the lumber could be obtained. I once heard an aged lady tell of the time when she, a bride of eighteen summers, settled in what is now Hamilton, in the year 1788. She said: "We had a blanket to close the opening where

the door should have been. At night we climbed up a ladder to the loft where we slept. Then the wolves would push aside the blanket, enter the house and howl." A pleasant lullaby, wasn't it? The same lady related how, when she was a child of seven or eight years, living in the beautiful and fertile valley of the Susquehanna, in Pennsylvania, the rebels drove them from their home. The mother and older girls were busy cooking dinner, the men and boys about their out-door employment, and the little ones at play. Suddenly one of the boys ran in, shouting "The rebels are coming!" There was only time to gather up a few articles, the dinner was left cooking, and all hurried to the forest, where they were joined by other refugees and whence they saw their comfortable homes pillaged and burned. Then followed weeks of wandering in the forest, nearly starving, subsisting on roots, wild fruits and herbs, and even eating their dogs in their extremity. Finally they reached Canada, where they were at peace, though hardships were to be encountered.

In the same rich valley dwelt a quiet, inoffensive loyalist Quaker who volunteered to guide Mr. Land, who was escaping from his enemies. They were intercepted by the enemy, and though Land escaped, reached Niagara and became the first settler in Hamilton. Morden made no attempt to fly, being bold in his conscious innocence. He was captured and hanged, being tried afterwards, according to a custom which has not yet died out in some parts of the great republic. The widow and six small children driven from their home, found their way, after innumerable hardships, to this Province and settled in West Flamboro Township.

A young lady in Vermont assisted her brother and her lover in their escape to Canada. For this dreadful crime she was sentenced to receive a flogging in the public market place, forty lashes on the bare back. With such true tales might volumes be filled, all showing the injustice and hardship endured by these people.

How can we summarise the character of the loyalists? They were of all classes and characters; there were the educated and the ignorant, the rude and the cultured, the pious and the irreligious, Episcopalians, Methodists, Presbyterians, Roman Catholics and Quakers. But how is it that such adverse opinions regarding them have so widely prevailed? Those who remained in the States could tell the truth only at the risk of their lives, and those who emigrated did so under the most adverse circumstances, and in the majority of cases left behind their books and their family records. In many cases these had already been destroyed by their enemies; arrived in this country they had to struggle so toilsomely that there was little or no opportunity for literary work, yet some of their documents, papers and public records relating to them were preserved for a time in the govern-

ment buildings at Niagara, others in the homes of the more careful and the prosperous. But in 1812, when the log cabins were giving place to comfortable frame and stone houses, orchards were becoming prolific, and a general state of prosperity was blessing the people, the United States sent armies to invade and capture Canada, and when the forces approached the border, war was declared. The population of Ontario now numbered about 70,000, the majority of them U. E. Loyalists and their descendants. The Canadians flew to arms, resisted and finally repelled the invaders. Not, however, till the town of Niagara and various hamlets had been destroyed by fire. Thus perished many valuable records of historical importance.

Consequently the greater part of what has been written regarding the U. E. Loyalists came from the pens of their enemies, and the records of a favorable character are but few. The unfavorable reports and stories on the contrary have been sown broadcast, and as Canada has depended in a great measure upon the United States for its literature, our people have been indoctrinated with those tales.

But was there no foundation for these adverse stories and opinions? Undoubtedly there was, and it could not well be otherwise. We have all heard the old saying, "There is a black sheep in every flock," and there is no nation, community or party in which there are not hot-headed enthusiasts, imprudent characters and even criminals. Is it not related in the veracious chronicles of New England that among those paragons, the Puritans, there were found young people who were guilty of courting on the Sabbath? Yea, verily, and it is even reported that married men were convicted of and punished for the atrocious crime of kissing—their own wives on the holy day.

Joking aside, it is certain that political parties, even in the extreme case of civil war, do not divide on such lines as to include all the good on one side and all the bad on the other. Yet I have heard a Reformer say, "Of course, all the Tories are not bad, but all the liquor dealers and criminals are Tories." And he sincerely believed what he said, as did the Conservatives who asserted, "All the mean men are Grits."

In the old colonies were many ignorant, lazy, shiftless and ne'er-do-well characters. Readers of current American literature are familiar with descriptions of the poor white trash of the south, the ignorant, degraded and rude mountaineers of the middle and Northern States, and the half savage frontiersmen of Arkansas. When the Declaration of independence divided the people, some of these characters went with each party. On each side were some ready to commit excesses and to treat opponents with cruelty. On the loyalist side, at least, perhaps on both sides, many who ordinarily would be kind and merciful, were so exasperated by the outrages committed upon themselves and

their friends, that they lent their aid to their ruder compatriots in acts of retaliation which they must have regretted afterwards.

"Birds of a feather flock together," and when this province was settled, the rough, ignorant and half-savage characters naturally formed settlements of their own, and their descendants still keep together to some extent, their neighborhoods always being some degrees lower in material prosperity, morals and education, than other sections. But in justice to them let it be said that they are much in advance of the rude, uncultivated classes described in the American publications as occupying sections of the United States. One of these communities may have inspired the school teacher before referred to.

Notwithstanding all these things, it is asserted that our loyalists were the curse of Canada. How did they curse it? Having carved out in the wilderness homes for their families, they next set about making roads, building schools, mills, factories, ships, and churches. They brought with them their love of freedom and of representative institutions. In the year 1792, just one hundred years ago, and only nine years after the revolutionary war, when the population of this Province was probably not more than 30,000, they elected a legislature. This body held its first session in the Town of Niagara, commencing Sept. 17th, 1792. One of their first acts was to provide for the abolition of slavery in the Province of Upper Canada. This was nearly forty years in advance of the British Parliament, and seventy years before the great republic reached that degree of freedom. Yet many of these men were slave-owners, some of them from the South. It would take long to tell of the distinguished men the loyalists have given the country. But they have been and are among all classes and in every employment. Legislators, judges, clergymen, farmers, physicians, merchants, manufacturers and mechanics, they are everywhere among you. Dilapidated buildings and miserable fences, did you say? Would that I could take you for a trip through this Province from end to end and show you the thousands of comfortable homes with well tilled, well-stocked and well fenced farms owned and occupied by the descendants of the U. E. L.

After these people had so improved the country that emigrants from Europe could settle with a tithe of the hardships and privations they had endured, these new-comers and their children say: "These men retarded Canada in every respect." Shall such things be taught in our schools? Or, shall we not rather insist that our schools be taught by men and women so versed in the history of our land that they shall recognize and teach the fact that these people laid broad and deep the foundations for the comforts, the educational advantages and the civil and religious liberty we enjoy to a degree unsurpassed in any land. Let us also encourage a truly Canadian literature

and cease to depend so much upon foreigners for our mental food.

Poetry sometimes tells in few words that which prose finds it hard to relate, and it would be difficult to find a more graphic description of the U. E. Loyalists than in the following lines by Rev. LeRoy Hooker :

Dear were the homes where they were born,
Where slept their honoured dead ;
And rich and wide on every side,
Their fruitful acres spread ;
But dearer to their faithful hearts,
Than home and gold and lands,
Were Britain's laws, and Britain's crown,
And Britain's flag of long renown,
And grip of British hands.

With high resolve they looked their last
On home and native land,
And sore they wept o'er those that slept
In honoured graves that must be kept
By grace of stranger's hand.
They looked their last and got them out
Into the wilderness ;
The stern old wilderness.

All dark, and rude, and unsubdued ;
The savage wilderness,
Where wild beasts howled, and Indians prowled ;
The lonely wilderness,
Where social joys must be forgot,
And budding childhood grow untaught ;
Where hopeless hunger might assail
Should autumn's promised fruitage fail ;
Where sickness, unrestrained by skill,
Might slay some dear one at its will ;
Where they might lay their dead away
Without a man of God to say
The solemn words that Christian men
Have learned to love so well ;—but then,
'Twas British wilderness !
Where they might sing " God save the King,"
And live protected by his laws,
And loyally uphold his cause ;
O, welcome wilderness !

These be thy heroes, Canada !
These men who stood when pressed,
Not in the fevered pulse of strife
When foeman thrusts at foeman's life,
But in that sterner test
When wrong on sumptuous fare is fed,
And right must toil for daily bread,
And men must choose between ;
When wrong in lordly mansion lies,
And right must shelter 'neath the skies,
And men must choose between.
When wrong is cheered on every side,
And right is cursed and crucified,
And men must choose between.